



Customer Focus

Paul Maiewski is a fourth generation farmer from Whately located in Franklin County. He owns 100 acres of farmland along the Connecticut River in Western Massachusetts. Paul recently purchased 11 acres of prime farmland from his uncle, where he grows organically grown produce. "It's a big commitment" Paul says of the shift to organic farming.

Paul received Farmland Protection Program (FPP) funding in conjunction with the Massachusetts Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR) Funding. Combined, the two programs helped Paul to keep his land in agriculture.

"My neighbors to the north and south have already put their land under farmland preservation. I hope to pay off my mortgage with the funding."

In addition to preserving the soil resource base, this FPP project has enhanced critical wildlife habitat and maintained scenic vistas along one of America's designated Heritage Rivers.

Farmland Protection Program Massachusetts Summary

Overview

The USDA Farmland Protection Program (FPP) helps farmers keep their productive land in agriculture. The program assists States, Tribes, local governments and non-profit organizations by purchasing conservation easements for the purpose of limiting conversion to non-agricultural uses. NRCS provides up to 50% of the fair market value of the conservation easement to the cooperating entity, which acquires, manages, and enforces the easement. Landowners participate voluntarily, and protected farms remain in private ownership. Every protected farm operates under a conservation plan approved by the local Conservation District. Nationally, over \$52 million have been obligated to state and local entities since establishment of the program in 1996. Proposals were accepted in 1996, 1997, 1998, and 2001.

Accomplishments

In Massachusetts, more than \$3 million in FPP funds have been awarded to 35 farmers to protect over 3,320 acres of threatened farmland. This has been accomplished in cooperation with The Massachusetts Department of Food and Agriculture through their Agricultural Preservation Restriction Program (APR). As a result, FPP funding has served to leverage approximately \$6 million of Massachusetts DFA/APR funds in protecting the 35 farms mentioned above.

Outlook

Massachusetts has some of the best agricultural land in the United States. The Connecticut River Valley's fertile soil produces top quality products. Preserving land for agriculture in Massachusetts is not easy. Development pressures are increasing in the area at a rapid rate. The FPP serves to help bolster the Commonwealth's \$500,000,000 agricultural industry by helping to keep farms in active commercial use for perpetuity and by sending a strong message to the industry and its farmers that state and federal government are serious about encouraging a viable agricultural economy. Massachusetts state government has invested \$118 million to protect 530 agricultural properties totaling more than 48,000 acres since 1977. The Massachusetts DFA/APR program currently has 145 farms under APR application (with an estimated APR value of more than \$40 million).



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*Photo of Connecticut River
Farmland
Western, Massachusetts
Photo by: NRCS*